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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000333

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TREASURY FOR OFFICE OF AFRICAN NATIONS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [PINS](#) [GV](#)

SUBJECT: PATIENCE DIMINISHING AS PRIME MINISTER HAS YET TO  
FORM NEW GOVERNMENT

REF: A. CONAKRY 313

[1](#)B. CONAKRY 299

Classified By: Political Officer Jessica Davis Ba. Reasons 1.4 (b) and  
(d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Guinea's union leaders told us March 19 that if a new government is not named before the end of this week, they fear public protest. Although they have not set a deadline themselves, the union coalition says the people are losing patience with the time it is taking for Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate to name his cabinet. The obstacle is President Conte and his coterie, who are resisting the appointment of an entirely new slate of ministers, with several candidates from the Guinean diaspora. While Guineans are encouraged by the decree restructuring the cabinet (Ref A), the situation remains tenuous without a consensus list. Unions and others are concerned about the hemorrhaging of funds from public coffers (Ref B). As time continues to drag on, the risk of public discontent grows. If there is another round of protests, violence, and a spiral into a deeper crisis, a solution will be more difficult to achieve, since the population will likely revert to its January 22 demand for change at the top. End Summary.

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Union Leaders Firm on Stance, Cautious on Future  
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[1](#)2. (C) Since his appointment as Prime Minister on February 27, Lansana Kouyate has met several times with union leaders to discuss a range of issues. CNTG General Secretary Rabiadou Serah Diallo and USTG General Secretary Ibrahima Fofana expressed confidence in the new Prime Minister and say they are doing all they can to support his efforts. Fofana declared that it is too early to judge Kouyate on his actions. He continued, "I just hope that the Prime Minister is allowed to do his work -- if not, it will be bad, very bad for all of us." The union leaders are coordinating efforts to encourage members and the larger population to remain patient while the Prime Minister chooses his cabinet. So far, they have been successful in staving off calls for immediate action from their base, particularly in the interior. Union leaders upcountry want to establish a firm deadline for the cabinet appointments, with severe consequences if it is not met.

[1](#)3. (C) Diallo said that Kouyate has acknowledged that he is meeting resistance from Conte and his camp, who insist that the cabinet include a few current ministers. (Note. Our sources tell us the ministers that Conte wants to retain are former Prime Minister Eugene Camara, Minister of Agriculture Jean-Paul Sarr, and Minister of Transportation Ibrahima

Keira. Keira was spotted by one of our contacts at Prime Minister Kouyate's residence on March 18, making the obligatory "pilgrimage" that many others have recently made hoping to win a seat in the new government. End Comment). Diallo and Fofana agreed that the unions and the population at large would not accept the appointment of a single minister who has ever served in a ministerial capacity under either Conte or Sekou Toure. They insisted that this criteria is not negotiable.

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Have the Candidates, But Will Conte Sign?  
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14. (C) Although they initially resisted getting involved in the process to vet candidates, the union leaders admitted that the Prime Minister insisted they offer names for the cabinet. Kouyate reportedly said that the unions have led the struggle this far and must continue to play a role both in and outside of the government in order to foster consensus. Diallo and Fofana bemoaned being inundated with resumes and dossiers of hopefuls. The union coalition has established a committee to evaluate the "applications", summarize credentials by sector, and send forward the strongest candidates. Without offering specific names, Diallo confirmed there were several resumes of women who are competent, but may have been overlooked. Fofana agreed that there is no lack of talent from which Kouyate can choose, it is more a question of whether Conte will agree to appoint the Prime Minister's selections.

15. (C) Diallo and Fofana told Poloff that in their last meeting with the Prime Minister, Kouyate said the unions forgot to build a key component into the negotiated agreement with the government -- what they will do if Conte refuses to

CONAKRY 00000333 002 OF 002

sign a decree naming a government of consensus. Kouyate reportedly said that in this event, he would immediately resign. But the Prime Minister promised to forewarn the union leaders before taking this course. Diallo and Fofana said that if this were to happen, Guinea would erupt. When Poloff asked how likely an outcome this is, they replied, "Anything can happen - especially since it all still depends on Conte and he is sick."

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No Controls to Stem the Hemorrhaging of Resources  
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16. (C) During this period of continued uncertainty, Guinea remains in a sense of suspended animation. Activities at most ministries are at a standstill. Our contacts in key ministries such as Territorial Administration and Decentralization, Economy and Finance, and Foreign Affairs confirm that employees make an appearance a few times each week, but produce nothing. Most just show up out of fear that without the "face time", they might be the first on the chopping block as the government is restructured. Others come to work to divert resources from their associated projects and activities. Diallo charged that while Kouyate has tried to establish fiscal controls on cash, bonds are now being written for gold to be removed from the Central Bank.

17. (C) The union leaders cited the "unquenchable thirst" of the presidency for money. Fofana exclaimed, "I do not even know what Conte could be doing with all the money he is taking -- it certainly is not being spent to bolster Guinea's economy." Diallo said the main offenders are in the Ministry of Defense. Other key culprits are the Prime Ministry, prior to the arrival of Lansana Kouyate, and the Ministries of Security and Territorial Administration and Decentralization. Diallo said that people are taking what they can now, but hoped that all would eventually pay for their actions after audits are conducted and the perpetrators identified.

18. (C) Even Guinea's hospitals have taken to shaking down their patients, Diallo said (note: although this is not entirely new, given the lack of resources most medical facilities face). After hospital visits where international donors present victims with funds to help offset personal expenses, the doctors and hospital administrators lock the doors of the facility to demand their part of the payments. If the patients refuse to pay, their beds are given to others and they are refused additional treatment. The union leaders said that when they try to draw attention to these and other transgressions, the government tries to turn the facts around and blame the unions. At the same time, the union leaders told Poloff that the population has unrealistic expectations of them and that neither the unions nor a Prime Minister will be able to fix all Guinea's wrongs in the near term.

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Comment  
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19. (C) The union leaders' sentiments are shared by the majority of the population -- we will wait patiently for a government of consensus, but the end result must not fall short. The criteria for new blood is unconditional, and public expectations are high. Immediately following the appointment of Kouyate as Prime Minister/Head of Government, Guinea was engulfed in a celebratory mood -- all the sacrifices seemed to pay off with a people's victory. Over the next two weeks, average citizens regarded the time it was taking to appoint the government as a positive sign that the Prime Minister was consulting widely and that he was putting great thought and consideration into finding the best candidates. Through the end of last week, most of our interlocutors were optimistic. Now, however, there is a shift in the climate. The union leaders, who are in close touch with members throughout the country, expressed doubt that they would be able to keep things calm if the situation drags on past the end of this week. If Conte remains intransigent or Kouyate backs down, citizens will undoubtedly protest. The naming of a Prime Minister/Head of Government was a negotiated solution, not the primary demand of the street. Should this solution fall through, Guineans will return to their January 22 position -- change at the top.

MCDONALD